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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 MANILA 002655

SIPDIS

DEPT OF NAVY FOR ADMIRAL ROUGHEAD FROM AMBASSADOR KENNEY

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/04/2018

TAGS: MARR MOPS PINS PREL PTER RP

SUBJECT: YOUR DISCUSSIONS WITH PHILIPPINE NAVY CHIEF
ADMIRAL GOLEZ

Classified By: Amb. Kristie A. Kenney, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Admiral Roughead, greetings from Manila! In advance of your meeting with Philippine Navy Chief Admiral Ferdinand Golez, I wanted to update you on some of the key issues we are working here in the Philippines regarding their Navy and the Philippine Armed Forces. Recently, I hosted Admiral Golez and his staff for breakfast, and we had interesting discussions on a variety of topics. Our broad strategic engagement with the Philippine Armed Forces has contributed significantly to standing up their Coast Watch South initiative, and we continue to achieve successes against terrorists in the southern Philippines. Coupled with increasing border security, we are assisting the Philippine Navy with efforts to modernize its fleet and professionalize its personnel, two areas that Admiral Golez has made his top priorities. Over the last three years, the number of U.S. ship visits to the Philippines has increased, topping 100 this year. The goodwill generated by the visits and the increase in capability achieved in joint exercises, such as CARAT, have helped strengthen our overall bilateral relationship with the Philippines. However, we have more to do, particularly in encouraging the Armed Forces to address human rights concerns, and we believe the U.S. Navy can play an integral role in that area through the close relationship you enjoy with the Philippine Navy. In addition to his office call with you and attending the Army-Navy football game, Admiral Golez will visit the Naval War College during his visit, where he will give a speech on counterterrorism operations in Mindanao. END SUMMARY.

COUNTERTERRORISM SUCCESSES

¶2. (C) The U.S. continues to support Philippine military forces and law enforcement officials counterterrorism operations in the southern Philippines, with eight key terrorist leaders and over 200 other terrorism suspects killed or captured in the Philippines in the last two years. Most recently, top Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) facilitator Hajiruddin Dansalan was captured November 2 in Mindanao as the result of a combined Philippine operation supported by U.S. personnel, and Bangladeshi JI member Muhammad Alpariz was apprehended on December 2 in Mindanao. The operations were clear examples of the gains the Philippine forces have made over the last six years in utilizing the various assets of different security agencies to interdict terrorists, including the Philippine Navy.

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE INVALUABLE

¶3. (C) The U.S. is promoting a counterterrorism strategy that focuses on offering development opportunities in areas where the population is prone to terrorist recruitment, while separating the small numbers of terrorists primarily associated with the Abu Sayyaf Group and Jemaah Islamiyah from Muslim insurgents in the southern Philippines. Ship visits have been particularly effective at reaching isolated areas with community relations projects and the hugely successful USNS Mercy mission this past June brought much-needed medical treatment to more than 25,000 Philippine residents in some of the poorest areas of the country. Just a month later, the Reagan Strike Group provided relief to thousands of people who were impacted when a massive typhoon tore through the central Philippines. Clearly, the U.S. Navy has played a tremendous role in providing humanitarian assistance, and we believe this is an area that could be expanded in the future.

BORDER SECURITY, MODERNIZATION -- TOP PRIORITIES

¶4. (C) Admiral Golez is committed to increasing the Philippines ability to secure its borders, particularly in the porous southern region where the Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia struggle to monitor traffic along their maritime boundaries. Through 1206 funding, we have contributed over \$27 million in equipment over the last two years to assist the Philippines in standing up their Coast Watch South initiative, a system of radars, patrol craft, and communications equipment that will enable them to better secure the southern Philippines against illicit activities

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and terrorists. Approximately \$28 million is proposed in the FY 09 1206 budget to further advance the operational capability of the Coast Watch System. The Philippines is improving its cooperation with Indonesia and Malaysia and, with U.S. facilitation, has begun to conduct some joint workshops and exercises to boost information sharing about the key tri-border region. While the Philippine government has come a long way in a short time with regard to establishing a system to improve border security, more USG assistance will be necessary in the coming years to fully operationalize the Coast Watch South system and expand it into a national network.

¶5. (C) Secretary of National Defense Gilberto Teodoro is a staunch advocate of rapid reform (the Philippines spent nearly \$250 million on Philippine Defense Reform last year), and has taken a hands-on approach to managing the modernization program. Philippine defense purchases from the U.S. include more than 8,000 Harris radios, upgrades to existing helicopters, radar stations, patrol boats, weapons, and night-vision devices. In addition to implementing retraining of 82 battalions, the Armed Forces have undertaken a comprehensive restructuring of their personnel, logistics, and administration systems. Admiral Golez envisions the Philippine Navy as the key service in protecting the territorial integrity of the Philippine Archipelago. To accomplish this, Golez believes the Navy has to be comprised of well educated, well equipped, and highly motivated sailors who staff a fleet of modern and mission-appropriate ships. He is a strong advocate of continued and expanded U.S. military relations, recognizing the benefits that the partnership provides both countries through joint training and exercises such as CARAT.

CONTINUED SENSITIVITY OVER U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE

¶6. (C) The United States enjoys strong military-military relations with the Philippines, but our presence here is under constant scrutiny. The Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) was the subject of a joint hearing by the Congressional VFA

oversight committee in September to investigate allegations that U.S. military forces in Mindanao were violating the VFA.

At the September hearing and during an October follow-up visit to talk with U.S. forces in Zamboanga, key Philippine officials from every branch of government strongly rebutted the allegations and underscored the value of significant U.S. security and development assistance their areas receive. The intense focus on the VFA, along with media articles that routinely surface and contend that the U.S. seeks a permanent military presence here -- or even an independent Mindanao -- underscore the sensitivity surrounding the U.S.-Philippine military relationship, and these issues will continue to resurface at regular intervals. We continue to emphasize both in high-level discussions and public comments that the U.S. has no interest in bases or a permanent military presence in the Philippines.

HUMAN RIGHTS: COMBATING EXTRA-JUDICIAL KILLINGS

¶17. (C) President Arroyo consistently has expressed her commitment to resolving the complex and long-standing problem of extrajudicial killings and has taken steps in this direction. With increased Philippine government attention, spurred by domestic and international pressure, the number of extrajudicial killings decreased dramatically in 2007 and 2008, but more still needs to be done, and the Embassy continues to press the issue at the highest levels of the Philippine government. While many of these deaths and disappearances are more likely attributable to local disputes than to military or police action, it is clear that the government needs to do more to ensure that these crimes are fully investigated and that responsible parties -- whether or not they are connected to military or police -- are brought to justice. A strong and consistent USG message on the need to fully respect human rights and stop all extrajudicial killings is essential. I personally have met with top level Philippine officials to make this point, and the Mission constantly is engaging our Philippine counterparts on this highly sensitive issue.

ADMIRAL GOLEZ'S SCHEDULE

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¶18. (U) Admiral Golez departs the Philippines December 5 and will arrive in the United States in time to attend the Army-Navy game as your guest on Saturday, December 6. The next day, he plans to visit his son, who lives in New Jersey, and then attend a reception with RADM Wisecup at the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island. On December 8, Admiral Golez will have a day of briefings and deliver a speech at the Naval War College. He will travel December 9 to Washington, D.C., where he will visit the Coast Guard headquarters and have an office call with you in the afternoon. Admiral Golez departs Washington on December 10.
KENNEY